

## RECKLESS RALPH'S

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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### THE GOLDEN ARGOSY

by James E. Knott

A study of this juvenile weekly becomes all the more interesting because it marks the start in the publishing field of Frank A. Munsey, who died a few years ago reputedly worth at the time of his death some forty million dollars.

No. 1 of Vol. 1 made its bow on December 9, 1882 from the offices of E. G. Rideout and Co. of 10 Barclay Street, New York City. This number consisted of 8 pages  $15\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$ , was priced at five cents or \$1.75 by the year and contained as its feature story a serial by Horatio Alger Jr. 'Do and Dare' or 'A Brave Boys Fight for Fortune'. In addition there was a serial by Edward S. Ellis entitled 'Nick and Nellie' besides some short stories and the announcement of the new papers aims - to provide reading for boys and girls.

Frank Munsey's name appeared as Editor in the following weeks issue No. 2, together with another serial by Rollo Robbins Jr. (an Ellis pen name) called 'Up the Tapajos.' A short story by Ellis under his own name appeared in this same number, 'Jack Brown's Christmas' so Ellis was pretty well represented in the first two numbers.

The serials ran thru nine to twelve weeks and there were always several going, luring on the reader by the time honored method of ending the installment at a critical phase of the story.

Several stories were supplied by Munsey himself under his own name and he may have supplied others under pseudonyms because Alger, Ellis and Optic, who became regular contri-

butors as the paper progressed, frequently had two serials each running in the same issue under different pen names. Optic used Brooks McCormick, Ellis - Rollo Robbins Jr. and Lieut. R. H. Jayne, and Alger doubled under the pseudonym of Arthur Lee Putnam.

Among other early contributors were Harry Collingwood, Frank H. Converse and in the issue of March 3, 1883 No. 13 of Vol. 1 appeared a serial by Harry Castleman 'Don Gordon's Shooting Box.' This Castleman serial bore the copyright notice at the bottom of the page of Porter and Coates dated the same year - 1883 but this appearance in the Golden Argosy was the first publication of this story the book published by Porter and Coates not appearing for several months later. Incidentally this is the only copyright notice printed in The Golden Argosy and it would appear that the many stories by Alger, Optic, Ellis and other writers who contributed sold these stories to The Golden Argosy either reserving the book rights for another publisher or else The Golden Argosy marketed them after serializing them. For example 'Hector's Inheritance' an Alger story which opened in the issue of May 19, 1883 was copyrighted in book form by Porter and Coates in 1885 - two years later.

Munsey took over in No. 40 of the first Vol. and began to apply strong sales methods to increase sales. A few issues later in October, 1883 he offers the first 40 numbers at \$1.00 a set and claims that if kept long enough they would be worth \$5.00 and that it cost \$5,000 to illustrate these 40 numbers. Again and again in later issues he offered the preceding



years numbers bound and this probably accounts for the considerable amount of old files of this paper available today. The first number of Vol. II on December 8, 1883 appeared in the usual form but No. 2 the following week contained no stories whatever and was merely a catalogue of premiums for securing new subscribers. The issue of December 20th in the following year repeated this performance. Notice how this was timed to the Christmas season.

The paper gradually grew in size becoming 16 pages in December, 1886 although the size of the page was cut a little to 10x14. By this time many Alger, Ellis and Converse serials had appeared under the authors real name or under pseudonyms and the circulation was evidently building up fast.

Articles would appear which have an interest to anyone turning these old pages over today - 'The Coming Coronation of the Czar' in the issue of May 27, 1883 (and this was Alexander III and not Nicholas who ended the Romanoff line after the Soviets took over) also an article on 'The Funeral of General Grant' in the issue of August 28, 1885. Just after the account of Grant's Funeral a serial by G. A. Henty appears 'Facing Peril.' This is the same story as 'Facing Death' by the English juvenile author which was published under the latter title by Blackie and Son in England several years previously.

George Manville Fenn author English juvenile writer of note appeared in these pages by this time and in November, 1886 appeared the story by Capt. C. B. Ashley 'Luke Bennett's Hide Out' which has been credited by many people to Harry Castleman, the only possible pseudonym according to Jacob Blanck which that writer used. And this is in some doubt. One other story under the same author's name or pen name appeared in the following year 'Gilbert the Trapper.'

In discussing Castleman's work with Gilbert Patten some time ago he mentioned reading with pleasure years ago a story by that author entitled 'The Gold of Flat Top Mountain.' I had never heard of this title in connection with Castleman but I find it in The Golden Argosy of November 10, 1888 but it is by Frank H. Converse and not Castleman.

On December 1, 1888 The Golden Argosy dropped the 'Golden' from its title and thereafter it was 'The Ar-

gosy.' The reason given for this change was that the word 'Golden' savored of 'namby-pambyness' and led to the belief that the publication was for very young children only.

Edward Stratemier appears in the latter part of 1890 with 'Richard Dare's Venture.' Subsequently this author under that name and his pseudonym of Arthur M. Winfield wrote several of their serials for The Argosy.

Along around this time Munsey began to repeat some of his earlier illustrations and cuts - where a picture had portrayed a scene in a story five or six years previously it portrayed a similar scene now in another. As juvenile stories frequently must of necessity run into the same general situations and as readers grow up and away from juvenile stories this worked alright. A serial by Optic 'The Cruise of the Dandy' was reprinted in 1893, it first appearing in 1887.

With the April issue of 1894 The Argosy became a monthly appearing with an entirely new make-up, articles illustrated with photographs - a regular magazine although Alger, Optic and other juvenile authors continued to write for it.

Just how great a start this periodical gave Munsey is hard to say. He mentioned during one of the early years a circulation of over a hundred thousand - a few years later he announces that almost two hundred and fifty thousand had been reached. For these days and for a weekly which it was at that time these are large figures indeed.

At any rate it was under its original title The Golden Argosy and later as The Argosy one of the most popular papers of its time and in its pages from 1882 on could be found a tremendous amount of writing by the prominent juvenile writers of the period. During the first 10 years of its existence from 1882 through 1892 no less than thirty serials by Alger appeared, twenty-one by Ellis, fifteen by Optic and ten by Converse. Munsey himself wrote four and besides other writers mentioned such as Henty, Fenn, Otis, Collingwood, Graydon, etc., one serial was contributed by P. T. Barnum the circus man.

As is well known The Argosy gradually left the purely juvenile field and developed into a pulp adventure magazine although in the late nineties serials by Optic and other earlier writers were still appearing.



## TWO BOSTON PUBLISHING HOUSES OF STORIES

by Rev. Roland D. Sawyer

In the two decades 1865-1885, there were two Boston publishing houses of popular stories in the shape of both story-papers and novel form.

They were Richmond and Co., and they published THE RICHMOND NOVELS.

And Elliott, Thomas and Talbot, who published a double series, one in a "ten-cent size" and one in a "25 cent size." They also published a story paper called THE AMERICAN UNION.

Sylvanus Cobb and Ned Buntline wrote for this latter house.

I wonder if in their collecting any of our circle have run into these papers and novels. Their edition size was much smaller than the New York houses, and probably any of their novels or papers are very hard to find.

## NEWSY NEWS

by Ralph F. Cummings

The other day, I thought sure I had a real book that I wanted bad, but on looking it over I was disappointed, as here's what it turned out to be, "The Dalton's, or the Three Roads In Life," by Charles Lever, pub. by Chapman and Hall, London, 1872.

Ralph Smith says while he was on his vacation up at Old Orchard Beach, Maine, he ran across a book store that were selling S and S thick book size novels for 25c each, up and said he had some New Magnet Library, Nick Carter that were worth a dollar each. Boy, oh boy, the fellow must have thought he had a gold mine in his shop.

Millers Dime Novel Authors List, Saturday Library as #123 last no. Ralph Smith has No. 164, and I have No. 230.

Talk about old waste paper drives all over the country, is a good thing, but I know of people saving all the waste paper and boxes they can get hold of, while others destroy it in every way, why, there are stores that burn tons and tons of it. I don't call that very good patriotism, surely their nearest junk dealer would be very glad to pick it up, so it seems. While on the other hand, they are going to excess in paper drives,

people throwing in valuable books, magazines, stamps, songs, novel and story paper and what not, which in turn is sent right to the paper mills. That isn't right, and they'll see the day they are sorry for doing it, as when the paper is collected, no one has any right to examine a thing, or even to buy it, but off to the paper mill it goes, rare or not, and if you ask a little extra for your books, no matter what they are, how they holler, still they can throw away thousands in these scrap drives. I'm not finding fault, as the scrap drive is a very good thing, but the collector is the loser, and no one to blame but himself.

Will Crawford, the well known illustrator died March 9th, 1944, age 74 years, after a long illness at Free Acres, N. J., near Scotch Plains. He was a friend to Will Rogers, James Cagney and other. Some of his work was in the old Life Magazines, Puck, Munseys and St. Nicholas.

A fellow down in Miami, Florida, sent me 25c for the original Beadles Dime Novels No. 1 Maleska, a few weeks ago, didn't want any reprints, only the original. Why, you couldn't buy it for \$25.00 let alone 25c.

Golden Days was last published in 1907 with Vol. 28. Only two Libraries in the country have complete sets, Library of Congress, and the Philadelphia Public Library.

Golden Library was published twice a month, not a very good seller in the old days, as it seemed to much for young boy and girls, now they are being hunted high and low. No. 1 appeared in 1886.

Howard M. Reutschler, an old timer from Pittsburg, Pa. tells about the time he experienced as a telegraph operator in 1889 at Thatcher, Colo. He called at the ranchhouse here one Sunday. He knew most of the boys, they'd often come to loaf in his office. John Drew was the boss, and the punchers were taking it easy, sitting or lying in their bunks. One young fellow, who never shaved, fuzz all over his face, had just received a new bunch of our favorites, Nickle and Dime Novels. He was voluble on the joys he had reading those old timers. The house was strewn with novels all over the place. The young fellow said he was going to Sweet Water, Wyo., where things were more lively. In 1937 I toured the west again, but



found nary a one of the boys I used to know 47 years before. The then range boss knew nothing of Drew or any one else. Thatcher was much changed, and I'd hate to live there now.

George Barton states that the Old Sleuth Library ran stories of Old Sleuth, by Halsey, under the pen name of Old Sleuth, but many of the stories were written by other characters. George expects to do an article on this library one of these days. He will tell about Frank Tousey and others in the next issue.

David Adams also sends in— Now about Pen names. Gilbert Patten says to Dave—I can't remember all I've used, but the "Stanton L. Ives," should have been "Stanton L. Burt," and "Julian St. Dare," under which I wrote my "Cliff Sterling" stories, afterward published in cloth by David McKay of Phila., Pa., for the early issues of Top Notch Magazine. "Maj. Dangerfield Burr," like "Dr. Noel Dunbar," was one of the several pen names "Col. Prentiss Ingraham" wrote under. And of course you know he wrote the Beadle Novels supposed to have been written by Buffalo Bill, as well as the one or more under the signature of Dr. Frank Powell, Texas Jack and another doctor who was a great pistol shot. Beadle seemed to love military titles for their authors or pseudo-authors, but "Capt. Frederick Whitaker's" title was legitimate, he having served in the English army, in India. "Lieut. A. K. Sims" was John H. Whitson. And I was astounded some time ago to read that besides that of "Capt. Howard Holmes" Harbaugh wrote under perhaps ten or more other pen names, I couldn't read his stories any how, the characters were always vague shadows for me. I thought

I had done some writing with the Merriwells, but if Harbaugh used all those pen names he must have matched me for a time anyhow. Badger used only one pen name to my knowledge, and that "A. H. Post," appeared on his autobiography, sub title "A Young Border Ruffian." With the exception of the first few Nick Carter yarns written by John R. Coryell, were knocked off mainly by one man, who had written under variations of his own name and under pen names as well, for Beadle.

Charles Austin reports the death of Frank James widow, Mrs. Ann Ralston, 91, in Excelsior Springs, Missouri. A real old timer.

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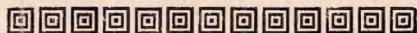
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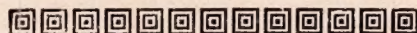
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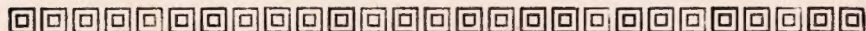
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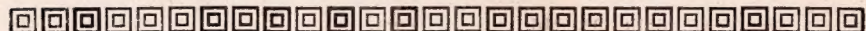
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